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Collective Emotions, Normativity, and Empathy: A Steinian Account

Thomas Szanto

Abstract

Recently, an increasing body of work from sociology, social psychology, and social ontology has been devoted to collective emotions. Rather curiously, however, pressing epistemological and especially normative issues have received almost no attention. In particular, there has been a strange silence on whether one can share emotions with individuals or groups who are not aware of such sharing, or how one may identify this, and eventually identify specific norms of emotional sharing. In this paper, I shall address this set of issues head-on. I will do so by drawing on one of the most elaborate, but rather neglected phenomenological accounts of sociality, namely Edith Stein's work on communal experiences and her theory of empathy. I wish to show that a suitably amended Steinian account affords us with an intriguing alternative to both phenomenalist and normativist construals of collective emotions. Moreover, I shall argue that it provides a more fine-grained account of the different types of emotional sharing than standard accounts, ranging from face-to-face, or shared, to more robust but less direct, or collective, emotions. Finally, I will propose a tentative answer to the above questions by pointing to non-dyadic or collective forms of empathy.

Keywords

Collective Emotions; Empathy; Edith Stein; Phenomenology; Social Cognition; Social Ontology

1. Introduction

How is it possible for individuals to, literally, share emotions? In recent years, philosophers, sociologists, social psychologists and neuroscientists have put forth a tantalizing variety of answers (cf. von Scheve & Salmela 2014). Curiously, however, some pressing epistemological and normative issues have received almost no attention. In particular, two interrelated sets of questions have typically been sidestepped: first, can and how can one share emotions with individuals or groups

who may not be aware of such sharing, or may not even actually exist; and, how do we know whether we, or others, actually share any emotions? Secondly, is there any epistemic, cognitive or emotive faculty to detect and identify standards and norms of emotional sharing and, eventually, whether somebody complies with these, and thus is a member of a given experiential community?

In this paper, I will address these questions head-on. I shall propose to answer them by developing an account of social and collective forms of empathy. In doing so, I will build on one of the most intriguing phenomenological accounts of sociality, namely Edith Stein's account of shared and communal experiences (Stein 1922) as well as her account of empathy (Stein 1917).

The argumentative strategy of the paper will be somewhat unorthodox in that I shall make the case for a Steinian account *ex negativo*, as it were: thus, against the background of sketching Stein's multidimensional theory of emotional sharing (sections 2 and 3), I will discuss the most salient problems it seemingly faces, and propose solutions to these problems (section 4), in particular, the solution based on collective forms of empathy (section 5). I will employ this strategy for two reasons: first, I believe that, in Stein, we find initial considerations of problems of emotional sharing that have not only so far been neglected but that are also of utmost importance to consider for any theory of shared emotions worth its salt. Secondly, these very problems point to the development of a theory of non-dyadic or collective forms of empathy that is certainly worth considering in its own right. Ultimately, this article purports to contribute not so much to a defense of Stein's theory, though, as I am largely sympathetic to Stein's account, I would be most content if my argument supports this task. Instead, my main aim here is, rather, to investigate the much-neglected normative and adequacy issues in sharing emotions, and to point to a powerful but equally neglected faculty, namely collective empathy, to resolve those.

2. Stein on Emotional Sharing

In her rather little known *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* (1922), Stein offers one of the most elaborate phenomenological accounts of emotional sharing. Stein argues that genuinely collective emotions are neither simply the result of emotional contagion (though this may also play a certain role, cf. 1922: 157 [188]),¹ nor do they amount to a mere summation or aggregation of distinct individual emotions (1917: 28f. [17f.]; 1922: 158 [190]); rather, they have a distinct intentional and phenomenal structure, a *we-mode* of being, and their own, plural,

¹ Here, and in the following, all translations of Stein's work are my own; wherever possible, however, I refer to the respective passages of the English editions in square brackets.

subject. As she pointedly puts it: “[t]he relation between individual and communal experiences is constitution, not summation” (1922: 122 [144]).

Stein’s account of emotional sharing is embedded in her general theory of “communal experiences” (*Gemeinschaftserlebnisse*) and, when she talks about communal experiences, she typically does not explicitly refer to “emotional” sharing (see, however, 1922: 156ff. [187ff.]). However, her most often used examples of communal experiences are paradigmatic examples of collective emotions (e.g., the collective grieving for a group member). She also marks a structural analogy between non-summativism regarding shared emotions and non-summativism regarding communal experiences (1922: 158 [190]). Moreover, the domain of communal experiences includes a range of phenomenal, affective, and emotive phenomena.²

Emotional sharing, for Stein, encompasses different levels of emotional life, except purely bodily “sensory feelings” (*Gefühlsempfindungen*, *sinnliche Gefühle*), such as itching or pain, and “body-bound” or so-called “general feelings” (*Gemeingefühle*), such as tiredness (1922: 123 [145]; cf. 1917: 118f. [100f.]).³ In particular, communal experiences include moods (*Stimmungen*), or what Stein labels “communal life-feeling” (*gemeinschaftliches Lebensgefühl*) (1922: 145ff. [172ff.]), and they are dependent upon so-called “sensate” (*psychisch*) “life-power” (*Lebenskraft*). The emotional life-power of a group refers to its respective affective disposition or ‘emotional energy’, such as the vigour or sluggishness with which a group goes about realizing a shared goal.⁴ In order to flesh out the notoriously obscure phenomenology of this domain, Stein uses the metaphor of the “rhythm of a communal experience” with a certain “life-colouring” (“*Lebensfärbung*”) of its phenomenal contents (1922: 158 [190]). Furthermore, groups may instantiate “emotions in the proper sense” (1917: 119 [100]) with an intentional focus, appraising an object or event in such a way that ideally accords to their emotive value. Again, Stein’s favoured example is communal grief. Finally, there are the least affectively laden, yet still emotive, communal experiences, which include acts of “value-perception” (*Wertkenntnisnahme*) or “spiritual emotions” (*geistige Gefühle*) that focus on supra-individual values. An example here is the feeling of an aesthetic value of a community of art historians (1922: 132–139 [157–167]).

Now, “experiential colouring” (*Erlebnisfärbung*) or the phenomenal “clothing” (*umbüllen*) of individuals’ emotional lives by that of communities is the core

² For detailed accounts of Stein’s multi-dimensional theory of emotions, see Vendrell Ferran 2008 and her contribution to this special issue.

³ Beyond their affective components, communal experiences also have various other components, which I can only mention here in passing: intentional, rational, spiritual (*geistig*), doxastic, volitional and personal components, and their specific (noetic) we-mode and (noematic) sense-contents.

⁴ For a congenial contemporary sociological theory of shared ‘emotional energy’, see Collins 2004.

metaphor Stein repeatedly employs for characterizing the phenomenology of communal experiences (e.g., 1922: 113 [134f.], 115 [136], 117 [138]). Importantly, and rather obviously, such ‘clothing’ presupposes some structural difference between individual and shared emotions (just as empathy requires some sort of a self/other-distinction in order for empathy to be an access to *other* minds). What is more, Stein holds that, even in successful instances of communal experiences—i.e., in cases in which there is no real “division” or “split” (*Auseinanderfallen*) between an individual’s “personal” and “communal” emotional life—there is still always room for an individual phenomenal “tone” or “mark” of just how shared phenomenal content is experienced by the respective individuals (1922: 117 [138]; 130 [155]). Also, as Stein emphasizes already in her earlier work on empathy, even in the most robust form of sharing, when the subject of the emotion is a ‘We’ that is co-experienced by its members as this very plural subject, there is still no “extinction” (*Auslöschung*), or fusion, of the individual subjects (1917: 29 [17]).⁵

In terms of the structural differences between individual and communal emotions, then, the most salient ones, according to Stein, are the following (1922: 113f. [134f.]):

(1) First, and most obviously, we have different *subjects of experiencing* (*Subjekt des Erlebens*): notwithstanding the aforementioned negative qualification concerning an alleged fusion of subjects, there is—formally and phenomenally—a different subject when we consider individual or shared emotions. In contrast to individual emotions, not only is there, in a straightforward sense, a plurality of subjects involved but there is also, according to Stein, a “constituted”, plural or ‘we’-subject of the given shared emotion.

It is important to be very precise about the ‘plural subject’ conception here:⁶ Stein is certainly not claiming that in sharing experiences there is a single, ego-like, supra-individual ‘We’-subject, such that this subject would have a shared emotion. True, Stein maintains that shared emotions have their own plural subject, a ‘We’, which “takes the place of the individual ego” and “encompasses a plurality of individual egos”. She even speaks of an “individual subject” who may, “notwithstanding its distinctness and ineliminable solitariness, [become] a member of a supra-individual subject” (*Glied eines überindividuellen Subjekts*; 1922: 113 [134]). And yet, however ‘supra-individual’, this subject is not an extra-entity, but precisely a *plural* subject. It is plural in the sense that it is not ego-like but, rather, a “consti-

⁵ Importantly, Stein also criticizes Scheler precisely for not having taken into account that, in emotional fusion or identification (*Einsfühlung*), not only is there “one and the same” (“*dasselbe*”) emotion with separate individual subjects partaking in it (*one* joy that we *all* share), but there is “higher order unity”, “constituted” by that set of subjects (a ‘we’) that is the proper subject of that shared emotion. The conception of higher-order social unities has a strong Husserlian undertone; on the latter, see Szanto 2015a and, on Scheler’s conception, Szanto 2015b, and Szanto & Zahavi forthcoming.

⁶ For details, see Burns’ congenial interpretation in this special issue and Caminada 2010 and, for a more critical reading, Caminada’s contribution to this issue.

tuted unity”, or, to use a current conception, a “social integrate” of individuals (Pettit 2003; cf. Szanto 2014).⁷ It is not an extra subject, above and beyond the set of individual subjects who share experiences. Rather, in sharing emotions, the individuals experience the plural subject, which “lives” its mental life “within” those subjects. Again, it’s not as if there were a multiplication of subjects within one and the same subject, i.e., a set of Is *plus* a We, experiencing the same shared emotion. Rather, part and parcel of the phenomenal *content* of the given shared emotion is that there is a plurality of (individual) subjects “constituting” a plural subject, and eventually constituting a “supra-individual” or “communal experiential stream of experiences”, of which the given emotion is an experiential part. If something affects this plural subject (e.g., losing its cohesive power), it is *this* plural subject, not my personal or individual one, that *I* experience as being affected “in me” (1922: 113f. [134f.]). In that sense, we might say that for Stein the plural ‘subject’ of a shared emotion is not so much a proper *subject* but part of the experiential *content* of a shared emotion, which is, in turn, just ‘part’ of a shared *stream* of experiences.

(2) This brings us to the second difference concerning the *structure of the experience*. Here, one difference concerns the already mentioned objective correlates of shared emotions, namely the fact that, in one case, it is an individual while, in the other, it is a supra-individual object of affective import or evaluation. Furthermore—and this is a much-neglected aspect of the intentionality of shared emotions in the current literature that shall prove crucial for Stein—there are two distinct intentional directions of shared emotions. First, we have, as with all emotions according to Stein’s intentionalism about emotions (see Vendrell Ferran forthcoming), the emotional target, or the proper object of the emotion. In shared emotions, this is a supra-individual intentional object or value. Supra-individual intentional objects of shared emotions are not simply public objects but, rather, must be apperceived under the same intentional mode, i.e., *as* shared, and targeted as having the same emotional import for me as for others. Thus, they are not supra-individual simply because they are shared but because they are targeted and experienced as shared. Moreover, in Stein’s view, it is a shared emotion’s having a common, supra-individual focus, which “pervades the individual experiences”, that “founds the unity of a communal experience”, and hence the sharedness of a shared emotion. Secondly, and correlatively, there is an intention that is directed towards the sharing of an experience or emotion itself (*Intention auf das Gemeinschaftserlebnis*). At this point, one might wonder whether this account of affective sharing is too cognitively demanding. In particular, one may ask whether it entails that individuals need to be *reflectively* aware of their sharing. Surely, it all

⁷ For another useful contemporary discussion of the notion of ‘supra-individual agency’, see Schmitt 2003. Schmitt, similarly, holds that a supra-individual action should be analysed not as an extra-individual but rather as an action whose agent simply is “*not* an individual”.

depends on how one cashes out the intention directed towards the sharing: as reflective, higher-order, or meta-representational, or else as some form of pre-reflective awareness of a given emotion, which is pre-reflectively given (to me) not only as my emotion but as my phenomenal experience insofar as it is shared by others. Though Stein is silent on this matter,⁸ I suggest qualifying this intention neither as a higher-order reflection nor simply as (plural) pre-reflective awareness (cf. Schmid 2014a) but, rather, as a specific *mode* of apperceiving one's own emotion *as* shared. Stein also characterizes this by the fact that, when an individual S has a shared emotion, S "claims to realize" an emotion of a group, and hence realizes her own emotion in the first-person plural, or 'we-mode', as member of a group (*We* are grieving") (1922: 116f. [138]). In any case, it is quite clear why one needs to refer to such an intention in the first place: without such a specific intention directed towards or accompanying emotional sharing, one would arguably have a hard time distinguishing emotional sharing from simply being causally affected by others' emotions, to wit, without being aware of such influences, or from automatically mimicking those emotions, i.e. from emotional contagion (Hatfield et al. 2014).¹⁰

Accordingly, there are two distinct relations of the "intentional fulfillment" of shared emotions: they can be fulfilled insofar as firstly, the "intention to realize the communal experience is fulfilled" and, secondly, the intention "does justice" to "what the object demands" (ibid). The two relations of fulfillment can come apart when the first is fulfilled and second is not; for Stein, as we shall see, a shared emotion can be fulfilled in the second sense even if only one single member appropriately realizes a shared emotion. In the next section, I will discuss the implications and problems of the latter sort of intentional fulfillment.

(3) The third difference between individual and shared emotions concerns the above-mentioned *stream of experiences* (*Erlebnisstrom*) into which experiences are embedded. This stream has, among other features¹¹, a temporally and motivationally structured internal coherence: one experience follows from and motivates another, or they affect one another causally by so-called 'sensate' and 'volitional

⁸ For a congenial and somewhat clearer statement of this, see Walther 1923, 84-86, cf. León & Zahavi 2015.

⁹ I employ this term here in a relatively broad sense rather than in the technical one that Tuomela (esp. 2007) and, following him, Salmela 2012 use.

¹⁰ Notice that the issue of whether shared emotions entail that all the subjects involved are aware of such sharing and of how such consciousness is then specified is orthogonal to the issue of whether shared or collective emotions as such entail that there is a collectively conscious subject (or distributed cognitive system) for whom it is like something to have such emotions; for an interesting (computationalist) alternative, according to which, because emotions are not, in the collective case, accompanied by first-personal phenomenal feelings, we should hence assume that there are phenomenally non-conscious collective emotions, which, nonetheless, share all relevant representational, agential and other cognitive features with individual and phenomenally conscious emotions, see Huebner 2011.

¹¹ For detailed analyses, see, again, Burns forthcoming and Caminada forthcoming.

causation', etc. Now, in shared emotions, this internally highly complex stream is not an individual but precisely a supra-individual stream of experiences. It is easy to misunderstand this, as if there were a supra-individual owner, some 'super-ego', *whose* experiences would constitute the stream, and to whom the stream would eventually belong. This, however, is far from Stein's view. First, the supra-individual stream is not to be confounded with some alleged supra-individual, or collective, *consciousness*, which would, according to Stein, be a *constituting*, rather than a *constituted* phenomenon. Constituting consciousness, however, is essentially and exclusively egoic, and ipso facto individual in nature (1922: 118f. [140f.]). Secondly, as Stein suggests, it's not some alleged bearer or owner, but rather the social *integration* of experiences and the appropriate *membership-relations* that make all the difference here:

The communal experiences and the whole stream do not simply *permeate* the experiential stream of the individuals involved, so that one and the same experience could be regarded as a component of both the individual experiential streams and the communal experiential stream. Rather, what the individual experiences as a member of the community forms the material upon which the communal experiences are built. Thus they belong to a higher level of constitution than the individual experiences. (1922: 119 [141]; cf. also 121f. [143ff.])

Stein's theory is particularly interesting with respect to the contemporary landscape. Stein offers a real alternative to the two most distinctive current accounts of shared emotions, namely what might be called the 'normativist', or plural subject, and the 'phenomenalist', or phenomenal subject, accounts respectively. According to the normativist account, individuals have collective emotions if and only if they are jointly committed to feeling emotions as one body (Gilbert 2002, 2014). According to the phenomenalist account, on the other hand, genuinely collective emotions necessarily entail a "phenomenological fusion" of feelings, such that "there is one token affective state in which many individuals take part" and which has its own "phenomenological subject" (Schmid 2014b: 9; cf. 2009).¹²

According to Stein's alternative, an emotion E is a shared emotion, if

- (1) there is an appropriately interrelated set of subjects $S_1, S_2, \dots S_n$ experiencing E at a given time *t qua* members of a group G, such that S_1, S_2 , or S_n respectively would not experience E were they not members of G, or if there were no G (i.e., S_1 's, S_2 's, ... S_n 's experience of E is co-constituted and experientially coloured by their group membership, and hence experienced in the we-mode);

¹² For the most convincing philosophical alternatives, see Helm 2008, 2014, and Salmela 2012, 2014 and, for a recent phenomenological alternative, Zahavi 2015; specifically, for critiques of Schmid's conception of "phenomenological fusion" in collective emotions, see Salmela 2012, Guerrero 2014, and Zahavi 2015. I will come back to Helm's and Gilbert's account in sec. 4.

- (2) $S_1, S_2, \dots S_n$ experience the same E , such that E has the same phenomenal and intentional sense-content and intentional object (a supra-individual value or evaluative target, an object, state of affairs, or event);
- (3) $S_1, S_2, \dots S_n$ constitute (by means of (1) and (2)) an emotion E^* that is part of a supra-individual communal experiential stream, such that E^* 's phenomenal and intentional content and correlate are, though realized individually in S_1 's, S_2 's, $\dots S_n$'s E -experiences, conjoined into one and the same, coherent experiential integrate, which has a plural subject (the social integrate of $S_1, S_2, \dots S_n$).
- (4) $S_1, S_2, \dots S_n$, respectively, have an (affective or cognitive) intention directed towards the sharing of an experience or emotion, i.e., towards (1)–(3) and, hence—though they are not necessarily mutually aware of their E^* -experiences at t —each member is respectively aware at t or some earlier or later time t' of there being a shared experiential current of which E^* is a part.
- (5) There are certain norms guiding both the appropriateness of E^* vis-à-vis its evaluative target (in (2)) and membership in the experiential community (as in (1)–(3)).

Registering a potential ambiguity, one should add a note to the concept of ‘sameness’ as in the ‘same emotion’ in clause (2), for one might wonder whether it refers to *type*- or *token*-sameness. Now, I contend that one of the distinctive merits of Stein’s account is precisely that it undercuts the infelicitous—at least when applied to emotional sharing—type/token-distinction.¹³ For Stein, though it surely is not sufficient to have the same more or less general type of emotion (as sameness implies sameness of phenomenal, intentional content and object-related features of an emotion (2), as well as certain normative features (5)), emotional sharing certainly does not amount to sharing or partaking in some numerically same, or token-identical emotion either. Instead of types or tokens, what individuals at the same time constitute and partake in when sharing emotions is a phenomenal-*cum*-intentional-*cum*-normative *pattern* of emotional experience and regulation—a pattern that is epitomized in formulations such as the integration into a ‘communal stream of experience’, and which I shall elaborate in some more detail in the next section.

Notice also that clause (4) is meant to allow for cases, also envisaged by Stein, where an individual shares emotions with others who are—at the given

¹³ Apart from Schmid (see above), the only other author to my knowledge who employs this terminology with regard to shared emotions, and claims that two persons can share, or “co-own” “numerically identical” emotions, is Krueger (2013, 2015a, 2015b); for further critiques, see Szanto & Zahavi forthcoming.

time—not aware of such sharing. This might happen because they exist at different times (e.g., their ancestors are deceased), or they do not *know* of one another’s existence, or they are not directly aware of each other’s experiences in a way that would reliably single out each and every participant’s experiences (e.g., because they are not perceptually interlinked or bodily co-present). Crucially, the respective individual’s emotions might nonetheless be both epistemically and experientially interlinked: they are interlinked, then, precisely by the necessary condition for sharing emotions, according to which each and every subject’s intention must at *some* given time—though not necessarily simultaneously for all, and hence there is not necessarily any *synchronic mutual* awareness—be directed towards the very sharedness of the emotion. Correlatively, the emotions are interlinked by the existence of a shared experiential current of which the shared emotion is a part.

3. From Shared to Collective Emotions

In the face of clauses (3) and (4), Stein’s proposal might seem highly counterintuitive. Talking of supra-individual experiential currents of integrated emotions *without* the respective individuals’ necessarily sharing a spatio-temporally converging, or synchronous, experiential domain, or without their being at least in some experiential and bodily proximity to one another, may seem vacuous. In order to address this worry, it might be useful to distinguish two distinct but typically continuous kinds of emotional sharing, call them *shared* and *collective emotions*. Notice that this is a distinction not made by Stein, and not even implicitly suggested by her. Still, I contend that it is fully in line with her general account.¹⁴

According to the current proposal, then, we have instances of *shared* emotions, if the following holds:

- (SE) An individual A shares an emotion *E* with another individual B at a given time *t*, if A and B, *each respectively*, partake in a convergent phenomenal, intentional and/or object-related, emotion- and expression-regulative pattern, relative to *E* at *t*.¹⁵

Distinct from such phenomenally ‘deep’, but possibly rather short-lived, instances of emotional sharing, we have *collective* emotions:

¹⁴ Salmela 2012 and 2014 develops a very similar and useful taxonomy, suggesting that “the collectivity of emotions [is] a continuum rather than [an] on/off question” (Salmela 2014: 169); see also Schützeichel 2014 for further useful classifications.

¹⁵ This notion corresponds by and large to Scheler’s conception of ‘feeling-together’ (*Miteinander-fühlen*) and his infamous example—well known to Stein—of two parents sharing their grief over the loss of their child (Scheler 1912/1926: 23f.). See also my note 4 above.

(CE) Members of a group *G* have collective emotions, if there is a ‘shared emotional culture’ with a robust evaluative and normative ‘shared appraisal pattern’, *within* or *relative to* *G*, and the members of *G* are mutually aware in either a direct perception-based or mediate manner (e.g., via technology, or cultural artefacts) of such shared appraisal patterns.

Consider, first, that SE and CE are though distinct forms of emotional sharing, they are not only not mutually exclusive but, rather, typically continuous. Further, notice that, for there to be such collective emotions, there must be, over and above the individuals instantiating them, some robust and robustly integrated group, to which those individuals belong. To put it in Steinian terms, we can view this in terms of a socially integrated experiential complex (roughly Stein’s supra-individual experiential current); however integrated, this experiential complex may possibly span relatively long periods of time, with potentially significant experiential gaps between members, who might not even be contemporaries. ‘Mutual awareness’ will then depend on some intentional mechanism identical or similar to the one formulated in clause (4) above. As I shall argue in the next section, the integration into a given affective group will, in such cases, be facilitated by the socio-psychological mechanism of social identification with a given existing or non-existing group. Finally, consider that collective emotions will typically—though not necessarily—be experientially founded upon shared emotions.

To illustrate the difference between these two kinds of emotional sharing, as well as their continuity and interrelation, imagine the following situations:

As a first example, suppose that two parents are at an important end-of-term college basketball game to cheer on their child. To begin with, we will typically have some relatively coherent pattern in the way the parents would emotionally prepare for the game: for instance, in recognition of the importance of the event for both their daughter and themselves, they might make a professional sacrifice and take the day off from work to travel to the college. Already at this stage what we have is both shared emotional import and a shared emotional focus (i.e., the emotional *significance* of that *specific event*). While the parents attend the game, their focus of attention will obviously be further focused upon their emotional target (the daughter, her team and their playing or winning) and even more coherently integrated. This will, among other things, entail that the parents *express* their cheering in a relatively coherent fashion: for example, both will clap their hands or cheer, rather than one yawning constantly while the other continues cheering. They will also *regulate* their excitement more or less coherently: one parent will not suddenly leave the sports hall in frustration, once it becomes clear that the team is about to lose anyway, while the other keeps clapping her hands,

but, rather, they will both continue cheering, or leave the hall together for the locker room.¹⁶

Now, roughly, from this stage on, the *shared* emotion of cheering might also gradually transform into a *collective* emotion.¹⁷ For example, this will be the case if the family members subsequently *narrate* or *document* the event, or *discuss its emotional import* of it *together*, together or discuss it separately with third parties in such a way that is still similar in manner. All this may include the daughter, who, having played in the game herself, did not partake in the same earlier (shared) emotion.

Most importantly, the members will know what it would—normatively speaking—mean if any of them were to emotionally ‘deviate’ from the shared pattern of preparation, expression and regulation of the emotion. For instance, members will be aware of the (emotional and other) consequences (for group cohesion, for the subsequent evaluation of the emotional focus, for the other members’ emotional, or even moral, reactions and attitudes towards oneself, etc.) of letting themselves be swayed by their boredom, or, even worse, by their excitement for the daughter’s adversary team given their more refined technical skills, or be ‘emotionally infected’ by the other team’s more powerful cheering. In sum, then, what we have here is a shared emotion-regulative pattern, providing the individuals with situational cues but also normative rules for how to express and regulate their respective emotions. In other words, and referring to the terminology of emotional ‘patterns’ above, we have what might be called a *shared or collective appraisal pattern*.¹⁸ Collective appraisal patterns, to be sure, are no once-and-for-all constitutional results of emotional sharing but are typically maintained, legitimized, or re(de)fin ed over time, and they may eventually become sedimented in some shared emotional culture. Such emotional cultures, in turn, are the collective equivalent of what social psychologists call social appraisal (Manstead & Fischer 2001; Bruder et al. 2014; see more below, sec. 4).

Speaking of a ‘pattern’ here implies that the given emotion is holistically interlinked with a whole web of relevant other emotions.¹⁹ That is to say, any given emotion must affectively and rationally cohere with those relevant other emotions (cf. again Helm 2008, 2014), and, in the collective case, with the relevant

¹⁶ Regarding coherence, some psychologists claim that “emotion sharing” serves, inter alia, the function of “establishing the sense of coherence with others and the world” (Frijda 2007, 223).

¹⁷ By ‘gradual transformation’ I do not want to imply that collective emotions would necessarily presuppose any (previously) shared emotions, though, again, this will typically indeed be the case. However, it might well be, as Stein also envisages, that I in a robust sense share collective appraisal patterns, with all their normative force, without ever having been in face-to-face or synchronous emotional contact with the others partaking in this pattern.

¹⁸ These should read as alternatives—though not mutually exclusive ones—i.e., shared *or* collective, depending on whether we are dealing with SE or CE.

¹⁹ For another classic psychological conception of emotions as ‘patterns’, see Izard 1972, and for an interesting recent account Newen et al. 2015.

other emotions of others, too. For example, on pain of our cheering seizing to be cheering for *our* team, or to be *our* cheering, our cheering will exclude our getting angry with our daughter or her team when they are about to lose, or rejoicing with the adversary team's fans.

To get a still better grip on the normativity of emotional sharing, consider another, similar, example. Suppose my daughter is the first woman in our family to receive an academic degree, and I am well aware of how much my deceased mother would have, like myself, been proud of her only grandchild for receiving the degree. I'm also aware that my mother would have wished for the whole family to be reunited for this event, sharing our joy in celebrating her together. In so thinking of my mother, I am also very well aware, and painfully so, of what it means that I am *not* going to attend my daughter's graduation, because I do not want to be confronted with my ex-wife, my daughter's mother, and her new boyfriend, who will also be present. That is, I know, both cognitively and emotionally (e.g., by feeling deep regret and remorse), how I *ought* to emotionally behave, given that it's *us* as a family who should celebrate.

Finally, consider the slightly different but related case of the exclusion of a subject from certain strongly cohesive communities on the basis of her not sharing a certain event of emotional import for the given group. In such cases, you would typically hear justifications such as 'You don't understand that; only we who have suffered know how this feels, so you ought not...').

From these examples and the underlying arguments, it should be clear, then, that emotional sharing is not only clearly distinct from emotional contagion (Hatfield et al. 2014), but it is also more than the mere aggregation of emotions with the same intentional focus and phenomenal content. Moreover, drawing on Stein's, admittedly unsystematic, account, we can indeed make the case for distinguishing between face-to-face, or proximal, emotional sharing, on the one hand, and less direct, but more robust and also normatively more complex and laden, collective emotions, i.e., those that do not necessarily presuppose the respective members' bodily or perceptual proximity, on the other hand.

What still needs to be specified are the conditions regarding the *appropriate* interrelation between the given subjects and the norms guiding shared emotions, mentioned in (1) and (5). This is the task of the next section.

4. Three Prima Facie Problems, and the Normativity of Emotional Sharing

Against the backdrop of this broad-brush sketch of Stein's theory of shared emotions, in this section, I will address the issue of certain adequacy conditions, or norms, guiding the integration of emotions into a communal current of experiences. I will do so by pointing to the three most salient problems concerning this issue. Each of these problems will eventually turn out to be only *prima facie* prob-

lems; Stein, or some sympathetic ally, is able to offer more or less conclusive solutions to each. Before going into the details, it is worth noticing that the three problems are interrelated, and that they are problems that any theory of shared emotions ought to take seriously—a task that has not actually been endorsed yet.²⁰ The reason why they ought to be taken seriously is that the problems are all related to a very general problem in sharing experiences concerning the possibility of error, mismatch or misidentification regarding the emotional domain of individuals and that of the respective groups. This possibility of the two experiential domains “coming apart” directly calls for normative considerations. Let us review them one by one:

(1) The first problem that Stein’s account, or any even remotely similar theory of shared emotions, seems to be confronted with might be called the *problem of (occurently) empty-set experiential groups*. The issue is whether or how there can be communal phenomenal experiences without there being any (actual) individual member of the given experiential group or members who are *experientially aware* of the respective phenomenal content. To be sure, this very possibility seems to run counter to any plausible phenomenological account of (individual) experience. After all, it is a core contention of phenomenology that, in every experience proper, there must necessarily be a subject of experience who is aware of her own phenomenal content. Thus, it might seem that this cannot sensibly be a genuine problem for a Steinian account. However, that this is not a pseudo-problem but one that we directly encounter in Stein’s own considerations is clearly brought out in the following:

Certainly, I, the individual ego, am filled up with grief [over the loss of our member]. But I feel myself not alone with it. Rather, I feel our grief. The experience is essentially coloured by the fact that others are partaking in it, or better, by the fact that I am partaking in it only as a member of a community. We are affected by the loss, and we grieve over it. And this “we” encompasses not only those who feel the grief as I do, but all those who are included in the group; even those who perhaps do not know of the event, and even the members of the group who lived earlier or will live later. (1922: 113f. [134]; cf. 117 [137])

Now, a possible way out might be to point to a possible social identification with existing or non-existing collectives and/or to some narrative coherence of the collective. Social Identification, here, is broadly understood as the emotionally positive, negative or neutral identification of an individual with a social group, or as self-categorization according to some more or less salient group-related prop-

²⁰ For notable exceptions see again Helm 2008, 2014 and Gilbert 2002, 2014, and some suggestions in Slaby 2014. Sociologists and social psychologists, to be sure, have elaborated on these issues in some detail recently; consider, for example, work on ‘feeling rules’ (Hochschild 1979; von Scheve 2012), the social ‘validation and legitimization’ of emotions (Rimé 2009) or ‘emotional regimes’ (Reddy 2008).

erties (cf. Hogg & Abrams 1988). Such identification will typically, but certainly not only, be facilitated either by negatively biased out-group biases or high in-group favoritism, or when one identifies with alleged feelings of belongingness to an actually non-existent experiential group, simply in order to distinguish oneself from a negatively perceived out-group. Eventually, this will lead to the construction and maintenance of an individual or shared narrative concerning emotional sharing, as in, for example, the re-instantiation or ritualization of past communal experiences in collective memory. Such narrative coherence may even substitute the social-psychological mechanisms of in-group/out-group distinctions, as when, for instance, one tells oneself a true or false story about the shared experiences of one's ancestors, and thereby experientially re-instantiates those in the we-mode.

Relatedly, one might resort here to the above-mentioned distinction between shared and collective emotions. Thus, unlike *shared* emotions, *collective* emotions will not necessarily involve the synchronous or bodily presence of all individuals sharing an emotional domain.

(2) The second set of problem concerns a well-known problem in social ontology, which might be referred to as the *problem of membership misidentification*. There are a number of possible types of errors regarding the relationship between individuals and collectives. For present purposes, it suffices to mention the following:

- (a) Though I have the same type of emotion as a given group, I misidentify myself as member of that group (in the most radical case simply because there is no such group).
- (b) I am a member of a given experiential group, but misidentify what the group's 'experiential standards', 'norms of feeling', or 'norms of sharing' are;
- (c) Some or all members of the group (individually or collectively) err as to *my* sharing an emotion, because I only pretend to share it, or fake the emotion altogether;
- (d) The group itself misidentifies or is mistaken about its own norms of valuing, experiential standards, or norms of sharing (and eventually I may, as in (b), be misled by the group's respective expression of those standards and hence be mistaken again myself) (see also Helm 2014);
- (e) Lastly, we may introduce some brain-in-the-vat type error, where, though I have the same emotion-type and the same phenomenal content as some group, we are not sufficiently interlinked, not because I 'unilaterally' mistake myself to be a member of the group, as in (a), but because, for example, the members of the group and I only dream or (collectively) hallucinate that there is a (shared) phenomenal state.

(3) The type of errors formulated in clauses (b) and (d) leads us to a third set of problems, which might be referred to as *the normativity problem of collective emotions*.²¹ These issues arise in large part also due to what Vendrell Ferran (forthcoming) has aptly coined Stein’s “broad emotional cognitivism”. According to this view, affective states, “even moods”, are essentially intentional phenomena and have “objective correlates”. Moreover, full-blown “proper emotions”—which are, in part, evaluative cognitions (and in part bodily feelings)—are related to and disclose values (1917: 108f. [92], 116–121 [98-103]). Accordingly, on the subjective side of the experiential correlation, a subject’s emotional reactions, even on the very affective level, will or will not be objectively appropriate. That is, they will be “right” or “wrong”, “rational” or “irrational” evaluations (1917: 119f. [100f.]). Thus, even if moods (e.g., sluggishness), or purely sensory feelings (e.g. bodily pain) (1917: 118 [100]) cannot fall short of the values they disclosed, proper emotions can.

With this in mind, there are three quite distinct questions regarding the normativity and appropriateness of emotional sharing:

(i) First, we have the issue of what is (rationally and/or phenomenally) required of an *individual* emotion to be part of, or to match, *shared* or *collective emotions*. Answers to this question will essentially depend on the nature of the group in question, the nature of the individual experience, and how these two are related, or whether they fit. For instance, the type of ‘emotional matching’ between my grieving for the loss of a child and my own family’s grieving for the loss of the child, on the one hand, and my grieving for the loss of a national sports hero and ‘national grievance’ for that sportsman, on the other hand, will significantly differ. The latter will typically allow for far more leeway in phenomenal divergence. Here is a passage that captures this issue well:

(...) the content of the individual experience can very closely approximate what is required by the supra-individual object, and yet by no means does it need to coincide with the content of the communal experience. This can be the case because (...), for example the event in question (...) can be falsely evaluated by single members as to its significance for the community. (...) [In that case there is] divergence of the individual contents from the intended collective content (...). (1922: 117 [137f.])

(ii) Next, one might ask what is rationally and/or phenomenally required of a shared or collective emotion to be appropriate qua shared or collective? Answers to this question will essentially depend on whether there is strong enough emotional integration. Specifically, it will depend on whether there is a relatively coherent emotional focus across the members, or whether there is a synchronous or

²¹ A very similar connection is observed by Caminada forthcoming, though his—indeed intriguing—reading of Stein is much more critical than mine in this respect.

non-synchronous “convergence in affective response” across individuals towards an event or object (cf. von Scheve 2013; Stein 1922: 156 [187]).

(iii) Finally one might want to know what is rationally, or in terms of evaluative norms, required of shared or collective emotions as such? This will hinge on two sets of issues: a) on whether the given emotion coheres with the pattern of emotions in which it is embedded, on whether evaluative attitudes cohere with its intentions and actions, and ultimately on whether the group has a (rationally) coherent pattern of emotions (Helm 2008; 2014) (e.g., if the group feels guilty about doing *x*, neither to be proud of itself nor of its members doing *x*; and b) on whether the evaluative attitude of the group is sufficiently linked or appropriately responsive to the emotional target (e.g., whether there was any event towards which the feeling of guilt is justified and, if so, whether collective and/or individual or personal guilt is the appropriate response). This is how Stein conceives of such a situation: “We feel the grief as something belonging to the unit, and by doing so, through this grief we are calling for the grief of the unit to be realized. (...) [Yet, there are] cases where the content of the communal experience falls considerably short of what is required of it” (1922: 117 [137f.]). Recall that for Stein the normative claims placed upon communal experiences can be fulfilled by a *single* individual, and yet be *shared* or *collective* emotions. Thus, somewhat ironically—and similar to the above problem of empty-set experiential groups—no actual plurality or collective of subjects is required for fulfilling the norms of a shared emotion:

If none of the members feels the appropriate grief, then one has to say that the loss is not correctly appreciated by the unit. If only *one* member has realized within herself the rationally required (*vernunftmäßig gefordert*) sense-content, then that no longer holds: for then the one is feeling “in the name of the unit”, and in her the unit has satisfied the claim placed upon it (...) then, that which is *intended* in [by the others] came to *fulfillment* in the experience of this one alone. (1922: 115f. [136f.])

To sum up, consider how these three issues of the normativity of shared emotions differ: the issue of whether a given collective emotion (say anger) is an appropriate reaction to a particular context, situation, state of affairs or person—the issue formulated in (iii)—is orthogonal to the issue of whether or not my anger is, phenomenally, cognitively, etc. the same kind of anger that the group, of which I am a member, is instantiating (i), as well as to the issue of whether all members of the group feel the same anger, or whether it can be properly said that *we*, as a group, are angry (ii). Though there is much to be said about the former issue, which is intimately linked to evaluative cognitivism and value realism, here I will restrict my focus to the latter type of questions, and especially to (i).²²

²² For more see Drummond 2006, and Vendrell Ferran forthcoming.

Notice also how all three types of normative appropriateness are different from any extrinsic factors of appropriateness. Thus, similar to brain-in-the-vat-type errors, there is always the possibility of error due to the fact we outright misidentify the object of emotional import (e.g., the grief is misplaced because the allegedly deceased turns out to be alive and well). This, however, is not in any relevant sense a rational or normative issue.

It is useful to compare this once again with Gilbert's joint commitment account of shared emotions. However problematic and dissimilar to Stein's phenomenology of collective experiences, Gilbert's normatively highly demanding account shares certain normative implications with Stein's. Thus, according to Gilbert, the individuals engaging in a collective emotion "have a standing to demand," or to "rebuke one another" for what "is not in the spirit of the collective emotion," which (normatively) "instructs" and "guides" the "public performance," including the adequacy of its display and the emotion's "expressive quality" (Gilbert 2014: 23ff.).

Similarly, Helm (2008, 2014) has recently argued for a normative account of collective emotion, conceived of as a shared "intentional feeling of import", or a shared evaluative "focus" targeting something that the group "cares" about. Given this construal, Helm tells us, "we can call a particular member of a plural agent to task for failing not merely to act but also to care or feel in certain ways demanded by the group's aims—for failing, that is, to care about certain things because the group does, thereby sharing the group's cares: 'What's wrong with you? Why aren't you happy that we've finally done it?'" (Helm 2008: 33)

To circumvent a potentially grave misunderstanding, an important difference from these two contemporary accounts, and especially from Gilbert's, should be noted. This concerns the fact that, for Stein, and rightly so, I contend, shared or collective emotions are not properly speaking *constituted* by normativity. Generally, a good way to approach this issue of the role normativity plays vis-à-vis emotional sharing is to distinguish between on the one hand, a *constitutive*, and, on the other hand, a *regulative*, or, broadly speaking, *procedural*, role. Thus, whereas according to Gilbert, normativity, or joint commitments, play a proper constitutive role for collective emotions, this is not the case for Stein. For Gilbert, the very emergence of collective emotions is due to two or more individuals' jointly committing themselves to feeling a certain way. By contrast, for Stein, emotional sharing is already at play on more basic, non-normative, levels of affectivity. In particular, it is constituted by the above-specified criteria such as the experiential colouring of individual emotions, etc. (see sec. 2). Normativity, for Stein, enters the picture only when it comes to the regulation of emotional expression and behavioural responses, group belonging, the fostering of group cohesiveness, or the maintenance of such. In other words, normativity here does not, properly speaking, constitute emotional sharing but, rather, determines membership in a

given affective group, and eventually regulates and structures the process of emotional sharing (hence ‘procedural’).

This, however, is not meant to suggest that normativity and emotional sharing are two wholly separate issues, or are only tangentially related. On the contrary: norms of emotional sharing and norms of (individual or communal) emotional import are essentially interlocked. This is so because what one *ought* to feel, according to some emotional or moral norms, will affect how one expresses and regulates one’s emotions, and eventually how and what one in fact feels—without ever *fully* determining *individual* phenomenology, to be sure.

The normativity of emotions, however, not only regulates group-level emotional processes, or how *groups* ought to feel, but also how *individuals* ought to feel. However, within the Steinian framework, the impact of norms on individuals’ emotional phenomenology, firstly, only concerns those emotions that are in fact shared or collective and, secondly, only ‘colors’ but does not fully determine, in terms of fine-grained detail, the phenomenology of, or individuate the (social or communal) emotions of individuals. For instance, personally, I may very well be less intensively emotionally affected than my teammates by the fact that my team is winning (though, this will notoriously be hard to tell accurately). I may feel less disposed to jubilating, because I received some discomforting news about my grandfather’s health earlier that day. But, as long as I am, indeed affectively, *committed* to our collective cheering, *display* that emotion according to the required ‘emotional script’, and also *regulate* my behaviour accordingly—notwithstanding my own emotional dispositions or ‘emotional energy’, as Stein would have it—my emotion will then, in fact, be a proper instance of our collective emotion of reveling in the victory.

Consider also the interlocking of norms in emotional sharing and (individual) affective phenomenology in terms of emotion regulation. In regulating emotions, we select or adjust the situations of affective import, or modulate our attention or our behavioural response tendencies (Gross 1998). It is commonly agreed among psychologists that the emotion-regulative and emotion-generative processes are inextricable (Frijda 1986). Typically, the way an emotion is experienced, or feels, reflects the specific ways in which it is regulated. Moreover, it may also be the case that I cannot express my emotions because the emotional culture is such that I am bound to suppress and regulate them accordingly, or because I have insufficient expressive tools or abilities to *feel* them or, at least, to feel them in the same way (cf. Colombetti & Roberts 2015; Krueger & Szanto forthcoming; Szanto & Zahavi forthcoming).

Another way to contrast structuring or procedural norms and constitutive norms for emotional sharing is by having a closer look at what kind of processes may actually serve to structure emotion regulation and expression. Roughly, one should distinguish here *synchronic* and *diachronic* structures: synchronic processes

structure the real-time display and performance of particular emotional episodes. Examples of such scaffolding structures are scripts for certain rituals (e.g., wedding ‘scripts’, musical arrangements), social venues and sites (e.g., sports stadia, confessional boxes in Catholic churches) (Parkinson et al. 2005, 225ff.), or the presence of peers, social appraisal or social referencing, in which one’s own appraisal of an event is delegated or linked to others’. For example, children find something disgusting if they recognize expressions of disgust in their caretakers. Meanwhile, there are more robust, diachronic elements, supporting or enabling the development of emotional abilities, such as acquired, implicit or explicit, and eventually internalized emotional norms (‘Big boys don’t cry’), and robust sociocultural scaffolding, such as the confession culture of the Catholic church, psychoanalytic therapy, or, more generally, a certain ‘emotional habitus’, i.e., an internalized and internally structuring mechanism of managing one’s own, and influencing others’, emotions, which are maintained by cultural, educational and socialization practices and norms (cf. Illouz 2007).

There are also a number of developmental and social psychological explanations available for the development of such norms of affective expression and regulation. In the least, this body of work can shed some light on the underlying socio-psychological mechanisms of the above-mentioned broad emotional cognitivism, or the way we learn to have certain emotions according to the affective import and the aesthetic or moral value certain objects, events, and situations have. Referring back to the above example (sec. 3), it suffices here to point to the large body of psychological research focusing on the pervasive role of shared family norms on emotion regulation and expression. In particular, it has been investigated how families and their expressive environment, i.e., their communicative pattern and style, deeply influence, shape, and normatively govern the appropriateness of both the children’s and, via feedback effects, eventually the caretakers’, emotional conduct (cf. Parkinson et al. 2005, 105–113).

Now, not only do norms of emotional sharing deeply penetrate the way individuals express, regulate and eventually experience their emotions. Conversely, what one emotionally cares for will influence what groups one feels one belongs to, or wishes to belong to. Again, these influences will be quite deep and diachronically robust. Not only will my recognition of actual emotional communities make a phenomenal difference on whether and how my emotions are formed: for example, I may not feel any grievance for the anonymous victims of a mining accident until I am caught up by the grieving around me in some public display of it. Rather, real or imagined group membership, and especially social distinction from some out-group, will have deep and lasting effects on the very norms of individual emotions and eventually affect how I display, express, and regulate my own (shared or not shared) emotions, as well as how I ultimately experience them.

Here, too, we find socio-psychological work focusing on the links between one's social identity, desired or actual group membership and emotions. This work suggest that events of import for one's own group will elicit stronger emotional reactions than those that bear no meaning for social identity, or that there is a significant correlation between group cohesiveness and one's readiness to comply in one's emotional conduct with group norms. Perhaps more interestingly, research here has also suggested that one's aspiration to belong to certain groups will also largely depend upon the salient affective properties that one associates with that group, which, then, carries normative commitments to align one's emotional personality with that group (cf. Parkinson et al. 2005, 93–97).

Accordingly, when it comes to emotional sharing, (epistemic or moral) disagreements on what one ought to feel, on the one hand, and emotional discordances among members or between members and a group, on the other hand, will be interdependent. In this sense, what Helm insightfully writes about so-called 'reactive emotions', such as resentment or gratitude, and their being essentially embedded in and co-constituted by what he calls "emotional communities of respect", can be generalized for all emotional communities:

Because an understanding of the community's membership and norms is implicit in the patterns of reactive emotions that we display and that I display as a community member, when I systematically exhibit (or fail to exhibit) reactive emotions subfocused on particular member(s) or norm(s) in ways that conflict with the overall rational pattern of reactive emotions we the community exhibit, such a conflict is between my and our commitment to import and involves at least in part a substantive disagreement over how to understand the community's membership or norms. (Helm 2014: 57)

Given this view, specifying what kind of rationally interconnected patterns of emotions a group has, or, what kind of 'emotional habituality'²³ it displays, partly, but essentially so, individuates the given emotional community, and specifies what kind of group it is, or what kind of 'personality'²⁴, as it were, the group has. Incidentally, this rather intriguing claim is fully in line with Stein's view on the essential relation between emotions, emotional habits, the constitution and hierarchy of values and the constitution of personal identity and personhood (cf. 1917: 119–126 [101–109]; 1925b: 97–101).

Now, the crucial question is how an individual or a group can deal with the problem of membership misidentification and the normativity problem. What

²³ For a congenial Husserlian inspired account of affective and emotional habits on the personal level, see Drummond 2006, esp. 13.

²⁴ For Stein, groups can not only be persons, even though she is somewhat ambivalent on that issue, cf. Stein 1922: 114 [135], 231f. [276f.], and 1925a: 37ff. [46ff.], 52ff. [68ff.]; moreover, communities, and even some societal associations, indeed may have a 'character' (*Charakter*) or a 'personality' (*Persönlichkeit*) (ibid: 214ff., 227ff.). I cannot go into that and the related problems of group personhood; see Szanto 2015b and 2015c.

cognitive, emotive, or other faculty may help someone or a group to identify some shared standards or to decide whether some individual member or some group meets those? In the following, final section I will sketch a possible reply, and argue that Stein’s account of empathy, appropriately expounded and allowing for non-dyadic forms, might provide the answer.

5. Social and Collective Empathy

Interpersonal empathy, in Stein’s view, is a “sui generis” experience of the other’s mental and emotional life. In empathizing, a subject accesses and comes to understand the psychological and mental life of another, without necessarily sympathetically sharing or mentally re-enacting another’s states, and without the two subjects ever fusing into “one experiential continuity” (*eine Erlebniskontinuität*). Though this remains contentious, and Stein is somewhat ambiguous on the matter²⁵, one can empathically access all kinds of experiential and mental states of others, including beliefs, fantasies, memories or expectations (1917: 19ff. [10ff.]). At any rate, for Stein, emotions, moods, and sentiments (i.e., the domain that chiefly characterizes ‘spiritual personality’, or personhood proper, for Stein), figure most prominently among those states that can be, and can be directly, accessed in empathy via their embodied expressions.

To be sure, there is little textual evidence that Stein held that non-dyadic, or even collective, forms of empathy were possible. It is an irony of fate that Stein’s only systematic and probably rather extensive discussion of such forms, Chapter 5 of her dissertation on empathy (Stein 1917), has never been published, and the typescript was lost. There are, however, two reliable sources on the subject. As Stein herself writes in a statement in her autobiography, in this chapter, she considered “empathy in the social domain” (2002: 328). Or, as our second source, Husserl, Stein’s PhD-examiner, remarks in his dissertation review, this chapter dealt with “empathy’s application regarding its application to social communities and communal entities (*Gemeinschaftsgebilde*)” (Stein 2000: 3). Given that evidence, it is all the more surprising that in her 1922 book Stein remains entirely silent on that matter. The most explicit, yet still scant, remark is a footnote in the dissertation, where she submits that there is the possibility of a specific sort of empathy in which the subject with whom one empathises is not another ego but a ‘We’ (1917: 29f. [17f.]; cf. also 1922: 115 [136]).

²⁵ Regarding this matter in Stein, I agree with Dullstein 2013; contrary to this, see Vendrell Ferran forthcoming, but also a passage in Stein, where she, in contrast to much more liberal and general characterizations at other places (1917: 19f. [10f.], 78 [61], 113 [95]), characterizes “empathy in the proper sense” as “the apprehension of an act of feeling” (*Erfassen eines fühlenden Aktes*) (1917: 108 [92]). For more detailed accounts, see Zahavi 2010, 2011, 2014; Meneses & Larkin 2012; Shum 2012; Jardine & Szanto forthcoming; Taipale forthcoming; and, critically of Dullstein 2013, Jardine forthcoming.

However, there are two reasons why one ought to seriously consider the possibility, the systematic place and the nature of social, collective forms of empathy in Stein. First, assuming that collectives can have experiences, and granted that empathy is the primary mode of access to other subjects' experiences, it is quite clear that, on the collective level, empathy must be possible towards groups as well. Secondly, appropriately repeated acts of empathy, which target either groups or individual members, are necessary to fulfil the above-mentioned normative requirements on emotional sharing, and to correct membership misidentifications.

With this in mind, consider first the membership misidentification problem. With individual-to-group and intragroup—or *social empathy*²⁶—and group-to-member—or *collective empathy*—properly functioning, various misidentifications concerning experiential or emotional sharing might be corrected. For example, individual-to-group empathy might reveal that I mistake myself as being a member of an emotional community, which, in turn, might happen due to the misidentification of what the community's emotional standards are. Conversely, when other members—individually or collectively—empathically target me as an alleged member of their experiential community, they might realize, say, that my values, or my moral or emotional phenomenology, fundamentally differ from their phenomenal life, and hence they may correct their initial misidentification of me as sharing some experiences with them.

Matters are very similar concerning the normativity of experiential sharing. Recall that we need to distinguish two issues here. First, there is the question of what is required of an individual in order to be part of a communal stream of experience or to match, in affective grades or phenomenal shades, some shared emotion. Secondly, there is the issue of what is “rationally” and/or phenomenally required of a shared emotion to be shared in the first place. Depending on which set of normative issues we are dealing with, social or collective empathy will serve as a solution.

Thus, by means of possibly repeated acts of social empathy, an individual might identify any “divergence” or “falling-short” of her own phenomenal content relative to the shared or collective emotion. Furthermore, if, for example, she realizes that she is not able to live up to the emotional, axiological, etc. standards of the group, she might, at least, reexamine whether it is worth aiming at such standards or better to leave the group altogether. Equally, when it comes to collective empathy, a group may want to assess whether a particular member is “realizing” the collective phenomenal content. A group may do this in order to determine whether a particular individual should be included in or excluded from its

²⁶ To be sure, the attribute ‘social’ here should in no way imply that I take ordinary forms of empathy *not* to be social, but simply indicates the difference in the relata of the empathic relation compared to interpersonal cases.

experiential community, but this process might also stem from less restrictive motives: a group might, for instance, wish to assess the ability of a potential candidate to “satisfy” a phenomenal “claim placed upon her” and, thereby, eventually pick out somebody who can experientially, in a way ‘authentically’, represent the group, say vis-à-vis third-parties (cf. the quote above, sec. 4).

Regarding the second set of normativity issues, we have seen that, just as individuals can, in Stein’s view, fall short of what is rationally and affectively required of their collective emotions, so too can groups do so in various ways. Accordingly, intragroup, member-to-member, as well as individual-to-group empathy is needed to identify such shortcomings.

Moreover, just as interpersonal empathy, for Stein, is co-constitutive of one’s own personhood, and chiefly contributes to self-knowledge and to self-assessment vis-à-vis others (1917: 106f. [88f.], 134f. [116]), collective empathy chiefly contributes to one’s and/or a group’s own constitution in terms of social identification or membership-identification.

Finally, even with a view to the problem of occurrently empty set experiential groups, social and collective empathy might serve as an initial solution, above and beyond the already-mentioned social identification approach, to the problem. Thus, by engaging in social empathy, both members and third-party observers might first identify whether or not there are any individuals who actually share some emotional episode and, if not, eventually track down some affective or narrative social identification to past members or groups.²⁷

6. Conclusion

I aimed to show how a contemporary reconstruction of Stein’s phenomenology of communal experiences, and a suitable amendment of her theory of empathy, commends itself for directly addressing some of the key yet much-neglected epistemological and normative issues regarding collective emotions. This seems all the more needed, as recent philosophical debates on collective emotions have all too one-sidedly focused *either* on the phenomenal (Schmid) *or* on the normative aspects of emotional sharing (Gilbert and Helm). In marked contrast to such approaches, Stein’s work provides one of the most sustained attempts to accommodate both these fundamental dimensions of collective emotions, and of collective intentionality generally.

At the same time, an admittedly charitable reading of Stein’s theory of communal experiences offers a novel way to forego the employment of the unpropitious type/token scheme for emotional sharing and, alternatively, to stress

²⁷ Much more needs to be said here, especially in reply to a number of potential worries regarding such social and collective forms of empathy, such as the problem of embodiment, or empathy-deceptions on the collective level.

the importance of the socio-normative integration and regulation of emotional sharing (above and beyond, that is, their well recognized phenomenal and intentional aspects).

Moreover, with very few exceptions (Salmela 2012, 2014), philosophers have typically not distinguished levels of dimensions of emotional sharing. But, by doing so, most have ignored an attractive and viable, Stein-inspired, solution for what I have labelled the ‘problem of empty-set experiential groups’. Thus, by distinguishing *shared* and more robust but less direct *collective* emotions, we can make room for the important distinction between those cases in which all parties must (mutually) be aware of each other’s emotional focus (shared emotions), and those for which this is not necessarily the case (collective emotions).

Lastly, as additional support for the most salient epistemological and normative problems associated with collective emotions, I have etched into relief a theory of non-interpersonal empathy. Though we do not find direct textual evidence in Stein for such a theory, systematically viewed, her work affords us with the necessary conceptual framework to devise one. Needless to say, further argument is needed to buttress this claim and especially to add more flesh to the rough-and-ready account above. However, if the general line of my argument goes through, we can already begin to see how social and collective forms of empathy offer interesting ways out of the most salient misidentification and normative predicaments in which individuals might be entangled when sharing emotions.

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